

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN •

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NEWS AND OPINIONS

(Continued from page 282)

Beware of Words

LAST week I had something to say on the coercive power that words exercise over thought; but there is much more that needs saying under that head. There is an old saying that language was invented to disguise thought. That is true only so far as the practice of certain people, or groups of people, is concerned. The now well-established truth concerning primitive humanity is that names and words are normally identified with things. I again refer to the indispensable Frazer:—

“Unable to discriminate clearly between words and things, the savage commonly fancies that the link between a name and the person or thing denominated by it is not a mere arbitrary and ideal association, but a real and substantial bond which unites the two in such a way that magic may be wrought on a man just as easily through his name as through his hair, his nails, or any other material part of his person. In fact, primitive man regards his name as a vital portion of his person.”

Those interested should read the sixth chapter of the third volume of Frazer's last edition of “Golden Bough.” They will, also get a good summary of the matter in Clodd's useful “Magic in Names.” Christians, indeed, will find it staring them in their face in the gospel of St. John: “In the beginning was the word,” and “The word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” This was not pictorial imagery; it was taken as a literal fact, and is one of the many indications that the Christian religion was in essence a return to a more primitive form of belief than was then current in many directions. Culturally, the rise of Christianity represents as much a retrogression as does Hitler's Nazism. The sacred quality of names, their power to do things for good or evil is found all over the primitive world to-day and exists amongst those who normally regard themselves as civilised beings. Even to-day we have in parts of Europe, to say nothing of what we regard as less civilised parts of the

world, the same belief in the power of words over things and the identity of words and things. In India and in south-eastern Europe it is still common to give a child a name for use and another name which is the real thing. The idea is that if the real name is disclosed anyone may work magic with it to the injury of those to whom the name belongs. It was for this reason that the Jews never gave the true name of their God. We moderns do not, in general, give words the same dynamic power given them by our ancestors, but we have our numerologists as quite good representatives; and one really cannot understand our modern primitives, from the throne to the slums, unless we keep in mind what has been said. We are a long way from the primitives in terms of years, but we are very close to them in feeling, in spirit and in our superstitions.

Language, intonation and manner of approach play a very powerful part in keeping worn-out ideas alive and in perpetuating institutions that ought to have long since disappeared. The parson's drawl and adonoidal tone is not due to mere snobbery alone, or to the desire to impress or to fool. It is that the business of the priest always takes something of the character of spells and magic, and everything—movement, speech, attitude and dress—must be of a certain settled type. A gabbled prayer would have no power behind it. Even the B.B.C. “7-55 terror” would probably recognise his own absurdities if they were not covered with so many “Thees” and “Thous.” If every now and again the word “Jesus” or “God” was not said in a manner that reminds one of one taking a dose of a not too pleasant medicine Christian influence would diminish.

Consider, too, the influence of tone and attitude in proposing the toast of “Gentlemen, The King,” and “Gentlemen, the Prime Minister.” The first is said with a voice of veneration, and it is drunk with all solemnity. There would be dark looks if anyone dared to smile at that time. The Prime Minister may be of far greater importance than the King. He often is; for while, during their lives, the deeds of kings are outstanding and their wisdom remarkable, a considerable discount has to be made after their death.

On the other hand, a Prime Minister has to be chosen with some care, and what he does is often of far greater consequence than what is done by a king. The Prime Minister, however, is where he is as a consequence of a vote, and may be gone in a month and forgotten in a year. But the King carries us right back to the time when he was actually an incarnation of the tribal god, as is the Emperor of Japan to-day. Our own monarch was also deified, in a limited degree, by the ceremony performed in Westminster Abbey a few years ago. So we may drink the toast of the Prime Minister with a pleasant smile or a sly wink of the eye; but to the toast of “The King” we must rise with the solemnity that belongs to sacred things.

We have just used a phrase that calls for a word of elucidation. Originally, "sacred" stood for something devoted to the gods. It might indicate a stone, a tree, a book, a building, or any one of a score of things. It still has that significance in many cases, but it has become secularised to the extent of including a call to duty, the fulfilment of an obligation, or anything we value very highly. Quite unconsciously we are helping our primitives by keeping this word "sacred" alive and associating it with things that are of real value. It involves a curious transition of qualities and functions. Things were once valuable because they were "sacred"; they are now "sacred" because they are secularly valuable. What Bentham called the "prejudice of names" operates to create and perpetuate confusion, and often injustice.

The tenacity with which these verbal and mental hangovers persist is very notable. It may be seen in all directions, but always most clearly with the aristocracy of a country and with its religion. The most primitive of all superstitions—that of the taboo—finds its perpetuation in the coats of arms of a nobility and the ceremonies that gather round the kingship. That one must stand within a certain distance of a king gives us a direct lead to the king who was an incarnation of a God; whose subjects did not crowd him, not because the king objected, but because it meant contact with forces that are as unpleasant to play with as a "live" electric wire. To see the king, accompanied by his medicine men, leading his people to a "sacred" place to petition the tribal god for victory in war takes us straight back to the commonest features of primitive religion.

About three generations ago an English Prime Minister received a deputation of pious folk who wished him to order a day of prayer and humiliation to God to induce him to put an end to an epidemic that was raging. He advised the deputation to go home and attend to their drains. A few months ago Lord Halifax, Minister for Foreign Affairs, advised people to help win the war by forming praying circles. That advice was given the widest publicity.

The man who said that speech was given us to disguise our thoughts was not dealing with fallacies. The correct term for concealing our thoughts by words is just "lying." Fallacies are more deeply rooted and of a more complex character than mere lies. A fallacy may be due to a misuse of language or to defects of understanding, or to inadequate information or to the use of words that have lost their original significance but are still current. But one must not confuse dishonest speech with fallacy.

It really would be a gain if we could put many of our popular words in cold storage for several generations. We should then be compelled to find a substitute for them; and while these substitutes might—probably would—after a time carry the same nullifying effect on clear thought that so many of our words do now they would for a time be "up to date." Consider such terms as "intuition" and "instinct." Both *might* be very serviceable shorthand summaries of thought, but at present are more in the nature of drugs that prevent thinking. When anyone says, "I have an intuition" for this or that, is he really saying more than that experience has taught him to take certain signs or symptoms as indications of certain other things? A doctor may say—doctors are often as loose in their

phrasing as are common folk—"I have an intuition that so-and-so is the case," but he is only using his experience as a guide to what is probably the cause of what is before him.

The common use of "instinct" is still more poisonous. As I shall have to deal with this at some length later, for the present it is only necessary to point out that in instinct we have little more than the creation of a mechanism that responds to certain stimuli in a particular manner. Little more than a generation ago our wisecrackers were informing us that the Russian people had no "instinct" for mechanics. To-day they are proving themselves to be as skilful mechanics as are to be found in any part of the world.

As a matter of fact, it is to the cutting down of "instincts" in man that he owes his greatness. With animal groups the conditions of life are such that they are able to maintain themselves with a few simple instincts; but the instruments with which man conquers his environment are of a different kind. He does not develop them as an animal develops hair, or fur, or claws or coloration as a means of adaptation to environment; his inheritance consists of tools, institutions, language and numerous inventions. Man's capacity for development is great precisely because he is born the most helpless of animals, with few dominating "instincts." An instinct implies an automatic response to environmental excitations; and it is this that man lacks and which enables him to adapt himself to the special and varied environment which forms the matrix of civilisation.

Let me close with a quotation from J. K. Hart's "Inside Experience," one of the shrewdest and fundamentally simplest of books, published in 1927:—

"We live; we live in and by means of our experience and our experiencings—including for most of us—soon or late, that phase of our experiences which expresses itself in the words 'I know.' But one aspect of our difficulty comes of the fact that *experience does not begin with knowings, or with knowing that we have experiences.* Experience is at first purely natural, like the growing of the trees, like the greening of grass in spring. This phase of our problem is our first and most difficult step in understanding. We have experiences long before we know that we have them, long before we know that we are.

"The infant organism begins from the first to *have* experiencings: hungers, thirsts, pains, growth-drowsinesses, joys, griefs and the like. It will be years—two, three or four—before that organism will be saying, 'I am hungry,' 'I have a pain.' We suffer, enjoy, hunger, thirst, hope, despair, are ravaged by beauty and torn by anguish long before we become aware that we are having these experiences, long before we begin to differentiate among our experiences, long before we begin to classify them and to make 'knowledge' out of them. *Having experiencings* always precedes knowing that we have them or knowledge about them."

I commend this passage to my readers. If they have the wit to understand it they will find it contains the beginnings and the substance of a sounder philosophy than they will gather from many volumes of "philosophy"

written under the impression that the cloudier the words the deeper and more impressive the message. My greatest difficulty has always been to convince people that all truth is fundamentally simple, and that obscurity and profundity are really not synonymous terms.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A CRITICAL CATHOLIC HISTORIAN

THE first Lord Acton was an outstanding personality. A lifelong student and observer, an intense admirer of George Eliot, the friend and trusted adviser of Gladstone, and the unswerving adversary of every aspect of religious persecution, he yet remained within the Roman fold and received the last rites of the Church at his death in 1902.

Acton and Maitland have been acclaimed as the premier historians of the 19th century. Maitland's secure reputation rests on a great achievement. His partnership with Sir F. Pollock in the production of their classic "History of English Law," and Maitland's "Domesday and Beyond," "Canon Law" and other writings bear witness to the latter's eminence. But Acton has no completed work to his credit, apart from his posthumous "Lectures on Freedom." Unfortunately, his projected masterpiece, the "History of Liberty"—the "Madonna of the Future," as he termed it in his letters—for which he accumulated vast stores of material, was never written. Against this meagre output we possess the histories of Grote, Lecky, Froude, Buckle, among many others, whose works were all published in the Victorian Age.

An extremely liberal, and almost a nominal Catholic, Acton was a deeply religious humanist who remained on terms of cordial friendship with men and women very widely divergent in religion. By no means an intellectual miser, Acton's immense range of knowledge was always at the service of any sincere inquirer. Indeed, his congenital veneration for truth caused him to be viewed with grave suspicion in clerical circles, and at one time he thought himself in daily danger of excommunication from the Church.

The son of Sir John Acton and a German mother, the subject of this article was born at Naples in 1834, and throughout his career ethical and emotional considerations retained his adherence to the faith of his ancestors. Yet he soon displayed a very pronounced aversion to Vaticanism, which he regarded as a bad blemish on the Catholic communion. Deprived of a Cambridge matriculation by the obscurantism of the college authorities, young Acton was sent to Munich, where he studied under the learned Dr. Dollinger, who was later excommunicated as a wilful heretic. Possessed of marked linguistic aptitude, Acton mastered four European tongues. As Herbert Paul intimates in his "Introductory Memoir" to Acton's "Letters to Mary Gladstone": "Of the illustrious Ranke he proclaimed himself a disciple, and it is intensely characteristic of him that his favourite among the moral philosophers of his own day was the Protestant, Rothe. Rothe's 'Ethik,' he said was the book which he would give to anyone whom he wished to turn out a good Catholic. But as Lord Acton would not have crossed the room to make ten proselytes, the value of his selection may be exaggerated."

After his conversion to Catholicism, J. H. Newman edited the "Rambler," but one of his papers in that periodical was condemned at Rome. This rebuff induced the future Cardinal to resign his post and the conduct of the review was taken over by Acton at the early age of 25. In 1862 the "Rambler" was merged with the "Home and Foreign Review," but its very outspoken tendencies soon caused a flutter in clerical dovecots. Thus, when replying to an address of the Romanist priests in England, Cardinal Wiseman seized the opportunity to severely

censure Acton's publication for its omission "of all reserve or reverence in its treatment of persons or things deemed sacred, its grazing even the very edges of the most perilous abysses of error, and its habitual preference of uncatholic to Catholic instincts, tendencies and motives."

To these admonitions Acton made a courteous but uncompromising rejoinder. In this he said that "a political law or a scientific truth may be perilous to the morals or the faith of individuals, but it cannot on this ground be resisted by the Church. . . . A discovery may be made in science which will shake the faith of thousands, yet religion cannot reject it or object to it. The difference between a true and a false religion is, that one judges all things by the standard of their truth, the other by the touchstone of its own interests. A false religion fears the progress of all truth; a true religion seeks and recognises truth wherever it can be found." It is significant that this passage was penned when the Darwinian battle was at its height, when both Catholics and Protestants were defaming the evolutionary evangelists as Satan's disciples.

In 1863 Acton attended a congress at Munich, during which Dr. Dollinger expressed views intensely distasteful to the Vatican. So the Pope, Pius IX., sent a brief to Munich in which he asserted that the opinions of Romanist writers "were subject to the authority of the Roman congregations." Although Acton was conscientious to the core, he was no crusader. Hence, his surrender to Papal authority by bringing the "Home and Foreign Review" to an end. It is, indeed, deeply deplorable that a man so intellectually and morally upright should have permitted his spiritual prepossessions to reduce him to temporary silence.

The reactionary Pope Pius, once hailed as a Liberal, issued an Encyclical in 1864 which anathematised modern thought. It was declared heretical that the Holy See should countenance progressive movements or modern science. It was claimed that the Catholic faith should become the sole religion of the State and it was asserted "that liberty of worship and freedom of the Press promoted moral corruption and religious indifference. There was, he added, no hope for the eternal salvation of those who did not belong to the true Church."

Acton and Dollinger were to some extent responsible for this Papal diatribe. The former remained silent and apparently considered himself withdrawn from the contest without relinquishing either his faith or his independent principles.

Until 1868 Acton contributed many articles to the "Chronicle" and in the following year a devastating essay on the Massacre of St. Bartholomew appeared from his pen in the "North British Review." This impartial study justified the conclusion that "the murder of Huguenots had been premeditated in Rome." Such inquiries were not favoured at the Vatican, and now that Wiseman had been succeeded as Archbishop of Westminster by the unscrupulous and dictatorial Manning, Acton's historical researches were faced by a remorseless foe. This is clearly shown in Purcell's authoritative biography, while Manning's bitter animosity towards Bradlaugh many surviving Freethinkers remember. Paul ably summarises the Acton episode in saying that Manning "with the ardent zeal of a convert . . . much in favour of Rome, he strove to suppress the religious independence of the English Catholics. But an historical controversy with Acton was a serious affair. It resembled nothing so much as going in for a public examination with a reasonable certainty of being plucked, and that prospect did not smile upon dignified ecclesiastics impressed with a due sense of their own importance."

A work opposed to the projected pronouncement of Papal Infallibility at Rome was favourably reviewed by Acton in the "North British Review." As all the world is aware, the Papacy triumphed at the Vatican Council in 1870, despite the eminence and ability of the lay Catholics and clergy who deprecated the Declaration. As Acton complained at the time: "The sole

(Concluded on page 299)

ACID DROPS

THE "Morning Advertiser" had hoped that the "translation of His Grace from York to Canterbury might have been instrumental in causing a modification of his economic doctrines, or, at any rate, have made him suspect that a dictum perhaps permissible by an Archbishop of York is hardly so suitable by an Archbishop of Canterbury, but no. The Archbishop's change of environment has not modified his ideas." We do not think the "Morning Advertiser" has cause for grief. The Archbishop's "economic doctrines," a rather elaborate description of a number of generalities, will remain what they were and continue to be as innocuous as they have been.

The Archbishop had an opportunity with the enormous sums that are to be paid to satisfy the coal-kings, the most expensive of whom is the Archbishop's Church. He might have advocated the surrender of this tax on coal that goes to the Church, and of which very few of the public appear to know much. The Archbishop did say that when an investor had drawn in dividends the equivalent of his investment, the dividends should cease, and he might have suggested that the Church should set an example. But not at all. Generalities that may mean anything, but usually mean nothing is the Archbishop's trump card.

We have constantly warned those whom it may concern that the more powerful of the Christian groups, and particularly Roman Catholics in Britain, in Canada, in the United States and elsewhere, will do their damndest to see that no close alliance between Russia and ourselves exists once the war is over, and this involves their doing what they can with safety while the war is on, lest the relations between the two countries grows too intimate. The latest illustration of this comes from the Roman Catholic "Universe," for July 3. The Hierarchy of Canada — Cardinal Villeneuve, 12 archbishops, 42 bishops and three diocesan superiors — has issued a joint pastoral letter in which the following passage occurs:

"What a tragedy it would be if through the relaxation of our laws against the subversive activities of the godless, the gallant resistance of the Russian people against their aggressors should bring to our own country the discord and class struggles which communism insidiously foments.

If this should happen our victory in this war would be only a truce before revolution, the bloody sacrifices of war would give place to the worse terrors of internal strife; and after fighting for Christianity, we should be at the mercy of the enemies of the very name of God."

There can be no mistake as to the significance of this. Taking the most charitable view it means, that Roman Catholics will submit to "friendly" associations with "Atheist Russia," so long as the help of Russia is needed. But when the war is won our relations must be of the most formal kind. That, in effect, means a continuation of an armed peace, and this time the "enemy" would be Russia's two hundred millions, and almost with certainty China's 450 millions in addition. And these, we repeat, because they are at heart peaceful people, make the finest fighters in the world when fight they must. 'Ware the Roman Catholic Church — and other Churches in proportion as they approach historical Christian orthodoxy.

Dr. Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, has just informed us that we must recover England for God. But we have been given to understand that this country is already a Christian country, and the Archbishop receives a thumping salary for seeing that it remains so. What we would like to know is whether Dr. Temple really thinks he can stem the steady decline of Christian belief? We do not believe he is sufficiently foolish to think he can do anything of the kind. Still, we are pleased to receive his assurance that after centuries of rule the English people cannot be accurately described as a Christian people.

We see, by the way, that Mr. Duff Cooper has another Governmental post. Men may come and men may go, but the Duff Coopers go on for ever.

The Lord Mayor of Birmingham has offended Churchmen by asking at a public meeting whether the Church, "which is rich and powerful, which owns vast properties and has influence and assets of all kinds," has done all it ought to have done to help social reform? Naturally Churchmen do not like this kind of questioning, but if the Lord Mayor is seriously concerned with the betterment of the people it would indicate a better understanding of the situation if they ceased to make these pauperised appeals for Church help. It is not, and never has been the prime function of the Church to secure the greater material and social comfort of the people. Its fundamental teaching has always been that these "material" things were of small consequence, that "spiritual salvation" was the only thing that counted, and it was under cover of this that the Church of England has secured its wealth and maintained its power. The people are easily fooled, and in this game the Church won hands down.

Good men there have been who belonged to this or that Church. Agreed. It would be a miracle otherwise. Men are men and members of a social group long before they are real members of a Church. And the evil of the Church is that it has used these better men to prop up the power of the less valuable, even an evil, type. It is this type of man, many of whom have broken, not merely with the Church of England but with all Churches, that have worked earnestly and the credit for which has been claimed by the Church. It has thus added spoliation to humbug. And the general public is so easily fooled that it can no more be called "sport," than robbing a child of its sugar-stick can be properly described as a desperate adventure. The mass of the people are not merely easily fooled, they clamour to be fooled, and the Church knows it.

Cardinal Hinsley gave a special broadcast the other day denouncing the almost unbelievable brutalities of the Germans in Poland. The Cardinal was strong in his denunciations, partly, one cannot help thinking because Poland is a stronghold of Roman Catholicism. There is no need for us to retail the charges. They are well-known, and to repeat them is to lay oneself open to a charge of concealed sadism. If these brutalities had been committed by a people who had been for many generations dominated by Atheism it is fairly certain that the Cardinal would take what has happened as a consequence of the absence of belief in God. That is, in fact, the inference the Cardinal did draw from the alleged terrible brutalities of "Atheistic Russia." But the Germans have a long and uninterrupted familiarity with Christianity, and that is a difference. Yet it must be borne in mind that the spirit of the Nazi movement is essentially religious.

But speaking with all the authority of the "only true Church," he holds out something that may cheer up Christian sufferers. He says: "Innocent blood cries to heaven for vengeance; the Lord will repay in his own good time." What a conclusion! It passes sentence on the Germans—a deserved sentence. But it likewise passes sentence on "our Lord"—also a deserved sentence. The Lord will repay "in his own good time." I fancy the Lord will not thank Cardinal Hinsley for dragging him into the mess. He will probably regard it as an indictment brought against him by one of his principal interpreters.

For the Lord ear—if the Cardinal knows anything about God, and I believe he knows as much as anybody—do as he will with the German brutes. But he does not will—yet. He does not prevent the torture and killing of women and children and old men. He is probably waiting to see how far things will go, and then at a critical moment he will appear. What an actor! His entrance has to be properly arranged. Meanwhile the Germans go on killing and torturing. A record is being kept—there is work for the recording staff here, and then in his own good time—he is not to be hurried—he will show the Germans what's what. And the outraged girls, the murdered women, the starved children will turn in their graves and say, "It's all right God, Hinsley told us you would do something 'in your own good time' but why didn't you fix your time a little earlier?" What a pair—Hinsley and his God.

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

Edgar Syers, "Athos Zeno," C. McCall and J. Humphrey.—Received. Will appear as early as possible. We have used up all the "cuss" words we know concerning our restricted space, but you are free to exercise yourself at your end of the trouble.

H. Day.—The reply follows the usual lines. It is a pity that their preparation for the pulpit does not include a real understanding of their own religion, to say nothing of their understanding the position of their opponents.

R. GAUNTLETT.—Book will be sent as soon as published; thanks for your efforts in obtaining 14 new readers.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2-3, Furnival Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 17s.; half-year, 8s. 6d.; three months, 4s. 4d. Lecture notices must reach 2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.

SUGAR PLUMS

WHAT should be a very welcome pamphlet has just been reissued by the Secular Society Limited through the Pioneer Press. It is Gerald Massey's "Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ," with a five-page introductory sketch of the author by Chapman Cohen. Anyone who knows anything of Christian origins is aware of the close identity between much that figures in the New Testament and the religious ideas of ancient Egypt. But few will have any real appreciation of the close analogies there are between Christianity and the mythology that was already hoary with age at the date given for the beginnings of the Christian religion. This is set forth with damning exactitude in Massey's essay. It is one that all Freethinkers should read. It is published at sixpence; postage one penny.

We have had several letters inquiring whether the figures given by "Julian" as to the wealth of the established Church at £25,000,000 is correct. We fancy it must have been a slip of the pen. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners acknowledge the income from rents, interest, and dividends alone at over £3,000,000 annually, and to that must be added many other sources of income, the ground values on which the Churches stand—an almost fabulous sum—and on the negative side, freedom, from rates and taxes, which often include the residence of the parson when his house is attached to the Church by a covered passage. It has been stated that the buying up by the State of the mining royalties alone would need a very large sum. We should like to see some Member of Parliament press for a return of the real wealth of the Church. He might risk his "career," but it would be worth risking. Another much needed reform would be the return of the wealth of Royalty. But that is too much to expect.

There is an old saying that revolutions are not made with rose water. It is equally true that reforms are not gained by asking those who unfairly profit by existing conditions to please, in their kindness and high spiritual development, help a reform that means the abolition of the régime or practices by which they benefit. Create an institution and it will fight, as all living things fight, for its continued existence, whether that institution be good or bad. The Church has followed

this common line. The cant of "righteousness" has been merely one of the things with which it camouflaged its essential quality.

The following is taken from a recent issue of the "Universe."

"Here is a nice story of the incongruous, told by Mgr. Wynhoven in 'Our Sunday Visitor':—

"The hold-up man jumped out of a dark doorway one cold night and held his revolver against the ribs of a passer-by with the order "Stiek 'em up!"

"When the victim threw up his hands, his overcoat was loosened at the neck, and the robber noticed he was a priest. Apogetically the bandit withdrew his gun and breathed: "Excuse me, Father, I didn't want to hold up a priest, although I needed the money badly."

"The priest apologised, also. "I'm sorry, too, brother," he said, with a smile, "I have no change on me, but here's a cigar."

"No thanks," gruffed the thug; "I gave up smoking for Lent."

There is nothing new in this combination of piety and robbery. There used to be displayed in St. Paul's Cathedral — we do not know if it is still shown — the following notice: "Visitors will please beware of pickpockets during divino service." The restraining influence of religion is very remarkable — when one analyses it.

The Bishop of Dunwich thinks that every Minister of the Church who does honest work is entitled to a wage that would enable him to live in moderate comfort from financial anxiety. We agree, with the following proviso. The payment should come from those who require the services of the Ministers of the Church. At present in one way or another everyone is compelled to contribute. The Bishop goes on to say that, "it was not agreeable with Christian principles or the law and practice of England for beneficed incomes to be either taxed or pooled." Again we agree. But the practice is banned and the law is damnable. The Christian Church has always taken care to grab a large share of the wealth of a country, and in this country the "law" has been always in favour of the Church, and the practice has been to so disguise the extent to which the Church preys upon the people that the British public, which is, taken generally, very ignorant of how it is ruled—and fooled—know little how and to what extent this happens.

The whole knowledge possessed by the world in the department of physiology, nearly all the biological conceptions, most of the anatomy, much of the botany, and all the ideas of the physical structure of living things from the third to the sixteenth century were contained in a small number of works of Galen, (Pagan Scientist, A.D. 131-201) . . . What is the secret of the vitality of these biological conceptions? The answer can be given in four words. Galen was a teleologist. Moreover Galen's teleology is of a kind which happened to fit in with prevailing theological attitude of the Middle Ages . . . According to Galen, everything which exists and displays activity in the human body is formed by an intelligent being on an intelligible plan . . . To know man, you must therefore know God's will. This attitude removes the foundation of scientific curiosity. After Galen, there is a thousand years of darkness, and both medicine and biology almost cease to have a history. Men were interested rather in the will and purpose of God than in natural phenomena. From "A Short History of Science," by Professor Charles Singer, pp. 92-3, 1941.

To-day a Church parade takes place somewhere in England. It ought to be a great show. For the past two weeks, hundreds of men have stopped preparing for the Second Front in order to make ready for the G.O.C.'s inspection. Blmp can't even listen to a Bible reading without blanco!

—From "Reynolds," 12th July.

The underlying reason for this kind of thing is the aim of all the Churches, established and non-conformist, to associate religion with anything that is attracting public attention. We wonder that big business firms have not employed some of our leading clergymen to control their advertising departments.

THE MANUFACTURE OF GOSPELS

I.

THERE is an oft-quoted passage in Mosheim's "Ecclesiastical History," which will always bear repeating, coming, as it does, from a fervent Christian:—

"For not long after Christ's ascension into heaven, several histories of his life and doctrines, full of pious frauds and fabulous wonders, were composed by persons whose intentions, perhaps, were not bad, but whose writings discovered the greatest superstition and ignorance. Nor was this all: productions appeared which were imposed upon the world by fraudulent men as the writings of the holy apostles."

At the moment, I do not intend to go into the question as to whether there is much or even any difference between the Gospels accepted by Mosheim as genuine and those he so contemptuously rejects in the above passage. It is admitted that "fraudulent" Gospels were written, and no doubt the pious Christian imagines or comforts himself, that these holy forgeries ceased a century or two after the (supposed) death of Jesus, and that Christians thereafter would never be responsible for similar forgeries. If this be really the case he will come in for some unpleasant shocks.

The truth is that "Gospels" have always more or less been written, and are still being written. So long as Christianity holds sway over the minds and the imagination of mankind, so long there will appear various new "Gospels" designed to fill in the gaps left so unhappily in those which are bound up in the New Testament, or to give us strange new facts about the "Saviour" previously quite unknown even to our Popes.

Some have already been written and accepted by large numbers of the Faithful, and they certainly form a bizarre and grotesque collection worthy in every way to be added, not only to the "genuine" Gospels, but to those which even with the best will in the world would not be accepted by the most believing of sheep.

An extremely interesting little work dealing with nine of these modern "revelations" was written a few years ago by Edgar J. Goodspeed under the title of "Strange New Gospels" and published by the University of Chicago Press. The author's opening sentence is particularly apt in this connection: "For many years I have been engaged in the study of early Christian literature, a field in which the genuineness of every document must be rigorously investigated." The reader will not fail to note this confession that "early" Christian literature has to be rigorously investigated before it can be accepted as genuine. When Robert Taylor or Edwin Johnson made the same claim, there was a terrible row and even some Rationalists could hardly conceal their opposition.

Mr. Goodspeed appears rather surprised that there were some "strange new Gospels" which, he claims, were not sought out by him but sent by "students and others who had come across them and wished information about them." The result of his inquiries is given in detail in his book and it is extremely entertaining.

He does not deny that religious people are "duped by these hollow frauds" and wants to save them as the "yearning for new light on the dawn of the Christian faith is too fine and good a thing to be left a prey to charlatans and adventurers." Unfortunately, Mr. Goodspeed nowhere in his book gives any reasons whatever to show that the documents he does accept about the dawn of the Christian faith are any more genuine than those he rejects. However, let us have a look at the "curious" pieces he unhesitatingly labels as forgeries.

The first is entitled "The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ." I remember this work very well when I lived in Paris 30 years ago, as it appeared on almost every bookstall and must have had a huge sale. It had, as a matter of fact, been published as far back as 1894, but so strong is credulity when allied to faith that when it reappeared in 1926 as the result of a "discovery"

in a monastery in Tibet—that well undefiled of similar discoveries—it was accepted in many holy quarters as thoroughly genuine.

Its title, to begin with, was the "Life of Saint Issa, Best Sons of Men," and a Russian war correspondent, Nicholas Notovitch, claims to have discovered it in 1887 at the Lamassary or Convent of Himis in Tibet. It was translated and published in 1894 in France as "La vie inconnu de Jesus Christ," and German, Spanish, Italian and English editions soon followed. One of the English translations was by the well-known novelist, F. Marion Crawford—a Roman Catholic, by the way.

Naturally it caused some controversy, and it formed the subject of an article even in the "Nineteenth Century," but it was gradually forgotten until 1926, when it appeared again in all its old glory.

Notovitch claimed that it was written within three or four years of the death of Jesus "from the testimonies of eye-witnesses, and is hence more likely to bear the stamp of truth than the canonical gospels which were written many years later." It fills in many "unknown" passages in the life of Jesus such as from "the visit to Jerusalem at twelve to the beginning of his ministry at about 30"—which, it is interesting to note, is described as lasting three years.

Mr. Goodspeed analyses its contents and concludes that "on the whole, as an ancient document, the life of Issa is altogether unconvincing." It "presents no problems, no difficulties," while the message of Jesus is "a pallid and colourless morality. . . Historically and morally the book is commonplace."

The analysis of its supposed finding, based on the narrative of Notovitch, is scathing; and the quotations from the article in the "Nineteenth Century" by F. Max Muller are deadly. Muller bluntly accused Notovitch of "a disgraceful fraud," unless it was the Tibetan monks who had duped the Russian. Notovitch tried indeed to answer his critics, but the result was so unsatisfactory that his book simply disappeared.

Mr. Goodspeed will not go so far as to say that Notovitch never visited Tibet at all, or that his narrative is just a tissue of lies; but that is the only conclusion one can logically come to. As a matter of fact, it is what Professor J. A. Douglas, of Agra, proves in an article in the "Nineteenth Century" for June, 1895. The professor actually was a guest at the Himis monastery, the chief lama in which indignantly repudiated everything claimed by Notovitch.

Mr. Goodspeed's final verdict is that "the Life of Issa is an interesting example of a whole series of modern attempts to impose upon the general public crude fictions under the guise of ancient documents lately discovered, and it is worth while to call attention to it because its recent republication in New York was hailed by the Press as a new and important discovery."

H. CUTNER.

A RUSSIAN SCIENTIST

THINGS Russian being in fashion, let us now praise Dmitri Ivanovitch Mendeléyev, chemist. Simply to style a man a chemist does not nowadays evoke much quickening of interest. Our great-grandfathers, I am told, leapt from their armchairs to meet eminent chemists with something of the alacrity we now reserve for film stars and eminent physicists. No disparagement to either of those exclusive bodies, I hasten to add, is implicit by the juxtaposition. Indeed, on reflection, I find that the two occupations are almost equally relevant to the point about to be made, to wit, that it is physics, pure and applied, that is now in the vanguard of scientific achievement; and what more striking manifestation of applied physics exists than film stars, "known" in features, mannerisms and accents to tens of millions of us who have never been within a thousand miles of their physical selves?

Yes, it is the physicists and no longer the chemists whose discoveries fill us with awe. (Their supremacy may not last long: Professor Haldane has suggested that biologists and physiologists

may become the scientific ringleaders.) The most prominent physicist, Albert Einstein, is popularly—and rightly, I believe—credited with the possession of a brain and an imagination qualitatively remote from that of the average human being. Einstein's principal, or at least most spectacular, field of research is space-time phenomena. Equally revolutionary, however, has been the development of atomic physics, where the names Bohr, Planck, Rutherford, J. J. Thomson and Moseley are among the more eminent. Rutherford's first "model" of the atom, now long superseded, was made in 1911. It was the culmination of a series of toilsome, disjointed and often apparently blind-alley researches by many investigators. But before his work could be systematised—before, in other words, directive efforts could be made to elucidate atomic structure—it was necessary to have some convincing idea of what relations the atoms of the several chemical elements bore to each other. Strong evidence had long existed that all matter was ultimately composed of no more than a few score of these chemically indivisible substances known as elements, each consisting of an agglomerate of its specific atoms. But a plausible classification of the elements—and, consequently, of the atoms—on the basis of their chemical properties, was lacking. (The situation may be roughly analogised to that of the new philatelist who cannot begin to evaluate his packet of stamps until he has learnt how to divide them into countries and arrange them in sets.) The man who, in 1869, accomplished this was Mendelēyev.

That part of the 19th century history of the atomic theory which forms the background of Mendelēyev's classical discovery is not uninteresting. It begins bravely with three almost simultaneous speculations of fruitful and enduring worth. Of the three, however, only one—Dalton's proposition that the strictly quantitative nature of chemical reactions was a large-scale reflection of simple laws of addition, combination and exchange in the world of the constituent atoms—was followed up. The other two were in limbo within a few years. One came from a physician named Prout, who pottered about with chemicals out of surgery hours and who one day timidly suggested that all atoms might really be complexes of a universal fundamental entity. In the then existing state of knowledge no countenance could be given to this hypothesis, but after a hundred years it was recognised that Prout had made an extraordinarily good shot in the dark. The other lost speculation was Avogadro's: this man would insist on a clear distinction between atoms and the small "bound" groups of atoms known as molecules. Indeed, he more than insisted; he produced results of some experiments with gases that admitted of no other simple interpretation. Yet, as already intimated, the point was ignored, and at the time of its instauration by Carrizzaro, 50 years later, confusion on the matter was not only unresolved but was seriously inhibiting further progress.

By the time the 1860's came along the concepts atom, molecule, element, were fairly clear and the need for classification began to be felt. In this connection it is noteworthy that conservatism can be as potent a force in scientific circles as anywhere else. Witness the reception given by the members of the Chemical Society to Newlands' observation that if the elements were arranged in order of their relative weights, many properties repeated themselves at intervals of eight—now known as the Law of Octaves. The chemists were amused; and when one of their company, with studied mock gravity, arose to ask Newlands whether he had tried arranging the elements in alphabetical order, their merriment knew no bounds.

Newlands' Law was to be triumphantly vindicated by Mendelēyev's classification, into which it fitted perfectly. The Russian professor had approached the problem with the true scientific spirit. He assembled every scrap of available relevant information and, ridding himself of preconceptions, took cognisance of all the correlations he could find, and finally built them up into a logical scheme. It became known as the Periodic Classification of the Elements; and, with modification such as Mendelēyev

himself would have agreed to had he had the necessary data, it holds good to-day. In fact, it was one of those instances of a scientific discovery that at once evokes from all who are interested, "Why, of course!" No one ever thought of looking for an alternative solution. The power and reliability of the classification is evidenced by two astonishing predictions that Mendelēyev was able to make. The first was that one or two established atomic weights were wrong because they didn't fit his scheme. He predicted what they should be; they were subsequently redetermined and lo! the results conformed almost exactly. Secondly, he predicted not only the discovery but the chemical properties of three new elements. That was in 1871. In the same year one of them, gallium, was discovered; in 1879 the second, scandium, and in 1886 the third, germanium; and Mendelēyev's expectations of their properties were in every case found correct!

One other activity of this great scientist deserves mention. He was very interested in petroleum and, realising the coming importance of natural-oil fuel, he publicly urged the breaking of the monopoly that controlled operations and retarded development in the oil-fields of the Apsheron peninsula of Baku. His success opened the way to the building up of the gigantic industry that is so much in the news to-day.

Mendelēyev died in St. Petersburg in 1907 in his 73rd year. In 1934 the centenary of his birth was the occasion of extensive celebrations in U.S.S.R. N. T. GRIDGEMAN.

PRAYER

Then shall men pray for nothing? If you ask
My counsel, I would let the gods themselves
Choose what is best for us and suits our needs.
They will fulfil our wants not our desires,
They love man better than he loves himself.

If pray you must

Ask them for health of body, health of mind,
For a valiant heart that has no fear of death,
But counts life's close as one of nature's boons;
That knows nor anger nor desire, but prizes
The tasks and pains of Hercules above
Dalliance and eates and Sardanapalus down.

JUVENAL.

(Concluded from page 295)

legislative authority has been abandoned to the Pope. . . . We have to meet an organised conspiracy to establish a power which would be the most formidable enemy of liberty as well as science throughout the world."

Acton's faith must have been sorely shaken by these sinister proceedings and the almost complete collapse of the opponents of Papal supremacy. As he himself suggests in a letter to Mary Gladstone twelve years later, his constitutional repugnance to moral evil may have dimmed his critical insight into articles of orthodoxy. "Encountering," he wrote, "an associate of Guy Fawkes or Ravallae, I do not stop to ask what he makes of the Apoerypha, or how far he goes with the Athanasian Creed. I believe that our internal conflicts spring from indifference to sin and not from a religious idea. A speculative Ultramontism separate from theories of tyranny, mendacity and murder, keeping honestly clear of the Jesuit with his lies, of the Dominican with his fagots, of the Popes with their massacres, has not yet been brought to light."

Another letter of Acton's contains a significant tribute to the beneficent labours of Freethinkers. In an epistle dated October, 1887, he stated: "Political economy and criminal law were the first branches of practical politics that assumed a scientific form. The founders of the former—Hume, Quesnay, Smith, Turgot—were all unbelievers. So were the reformers of criminal law—Beccaria, Morellet, Bentham. Jefferson (who wrote the American 'Rights of Man'), Lafayette and Sieyès (who composed the French)—were alike unbelievers." T. F. PALMER.

THE CRYSTAL

WHEN was it that mankind began to peer into the crystal and to believe that it could shed light over the obscurer corners of his life? When did he start to pin his faith on it in the hope that it could penetrate the dark future and guide his way? There are still many who visit the crystal gazer, whether in her salon in the fashionable streets of our capitals or in the queer little booths at the seaside, so impressively decorated with mystic symbols and highly detailed charts of the geography of heads and hands; for most clairvoyantes at such humbler places are not specialists in forecasting and assessing, but general practitioners. Most of us will declare emphatically that we "do not hold with that sort of nonsense." In my opinion most of us are right. I do not believe in crystals, but I am profoundly grateful for what a crystal once did for me. This crystal was not the glass globe of a clairvoyante, but it opened my eyes in a marvellous manner.

I think I found the instructions for building the contraption in "Chums," but it is quite a while ago and I am somewhat hazy regarding the details. There were a crude coil wound on to cardboard, four terminals, a certain amount of wire, the "cat's whisker" on its universal joint, and the crystal, to say nothing of the headphones, the aerial and the earth. The components were mounted on a cigar box, and it was just before we ventured, as far as a three-valve set with a sloping ebonite panel and an impressive array of knobs and dials. This crude little receiver was very exciting to me at any time in those days, but my great revelation came about in this way. It was one summer evening, and I was sitting, equipped with earphones, scraping the cat's whisker" over the surface of the crystal. I heard the announcer's voice from Savoy Hill, and he informed me that I was to hear the Presidential Address to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, delivered by Sir Arthur Keith. The meeting was at Leeds and the year 1927, so far as I remember. I was a boy of 14 then and, not unexpectedly, had never heard of Sir Arthur Keith or the British Association.

The president began his speech. His voice was clear, precise and utterly without emotion, and my attention was instantly caught. I had heard of Darwin and Evolution in a vague kind of way, and had imagined that he was a crank who had put forward some peculiar suggestion that our remote ancestors were monkeys. This could not be, I thought, because Genesis tells us different; but the cold, dispassionate account of the evidences of man's evolution preserved for us in the rocks, in our living bodies, and in the bodies of animals, stirred my boyish imagination as the words came through the earphones. There was a photograph of Keith in the paper the next day. I liked the keen, intelligent face and the broad forehead. I resolved to read more of the fascinating, frightening story that I had heard him outline. I browsed through Darwin, Huxley, Haeckel and sundry of the lesser giants. I thought that science was probably the most worth-while thing on earth, whatever it refutes and whomsoever it offends. I have worked among scientists and have met their frequent failings. But I still think the same way. I firmly believe that the widest vision of the true scientist, and that alone, can hope to save the civilisation and culture it has so largely helped to build.

S. N. FARMER.

CORRESPONDENCE

FREETHOUGHT PADRES

SIR,—Mr. Sturge-Whiting's demand on page 267 for a "Freethought Padre" is interesting. In early childhood an aura of omnipotence is commonly attached to the parent. With growth the parent is seen in a truer light, but the aura often remains.

At the cultural level of an Australian savage or a British airman the aura is attached to a totem or mascot which then

has all the powers formerly attributed to the parent. At a slightly higher level the totem or mascot is replaced by a god or spirit which frequently has its abode in the body of the temporal ruler or political leader. Mr. Sturge-Whiting, however, is in the unhappy position of having retained the aura but having found no peg on which to hang it. Such a position is rather analogous to that in which Anne Boleyn would be were she to walk the Bloody Tower with her hat tucked underneath her arm.

ALFRED BUNTING.

HELL AND CHOCOLATES.

SIR,—I witnessed an amusing incident in the main street here a short time ago. A queue of about 40 people, mostly women and children, were lined up outside a confectioner's shop patiently waiting the chance of buying a few sweets. Along came a religious fanatic, barcheaded, with a placard, back and front, bearing the words in letters six inches high, "The Wages of Sin is Death" and "The Gift of the SON is Eternal Life." He stopped in front of the queue and addressed them in a loud voice: "You will get no chocolates in hell, my friends." He continued to barrage these otherwise innocent sweetmeat seekers as if they were committing a mortal sin. The temperature of hell would certainly be bad for chocolates!

"JUDEX."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

Outdoor

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): Parliament Hill Fields: 3-30 p.m., Mr. L. EBURY.
West London N.S.S. Branch (Hyde Park), Thursday, 7-0, Mr. E. C. SAPHIN; Sunday, 3-0, various speakers.

Indoor

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1), 11-0, Professor J. C. FLUGEL, D.Sc.—Work, Play and Happiness.

COUNTRY

Indoor

Blackburn N.S.S. (Blackburn Market), Sunday, 7-0, Mr. J. CLAYTON, a Lecture.
Bradford N.S.S. Branch. Members and friends meet on Broadway Car Park on Sunday evenings at 7-30.
Blyth (The Fountain), Monday, 7-0, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.
Chester-le-Street (Bridge End), Saturday, 7-0, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.
Edinburgh Branch (The Mound), 7-30, Mr. REILLY, Lecture.
Higham, Friday, 7-45, Mr. J. CLAYTON.
Kingston-on-Thames N.S.S. Branch (Castle Street), Sunday, 7-0, Mr. J. W. BARKER.
Newcastle (Bigg Market), Sunday, 7-0, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.
Lamb-in-Rosendale, Thursday, 7-30, Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Ever since the war began we have been told it is due to the sinfulness of man and nothing will save us but a return to God. And what of the innocent ones who cannot be charged with responsibility? If there is a God, this war is his indictment.